

HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE OF THE ARMY AND NAVY.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

*Propositions relating to the organization of the hospital for the insane of the army and navy.*

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DECEMBER 30, 1854.—Referred to the Committee for the District of Columbia, and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, December 27, 1854.*

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 19th instant, requesting me to inform the House whether, in my judgment, any enactment of Congress is necessary for the permanent organization of the hospital for the insane of the army and navy, and of the District of Columbia, and if so, to report to the House such plan of organization as I may think will best promote the benevolent objects of the institution, I have the honor to transmit herewith a report made to me on the 23d instant, by Dr. Charles H. Nichols, the superintendent of the asylum, accompanied by the draught of a bill for the organization of the institution, and a copy of the propositions of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the organization of Institutions for the Insane.

At the same time, I transmit to the House a copy of the brief suggestions recently made to me on the subject by Dr. Thomas Miller, a resident physician of this city, who is understood to have manifested much interest in this subject from its inception.

Dr. Nichols is a gentleman of much practical experience in regard to institutions of this kind, as has been manifested in the planning and erection of the edifice, now partially completed, in all of which he has commanded the entire approbation of the department; and, while I am disposed to place great confidence in his present suggestions, I submit the particular form of organization with equal confidence to the wisdom of Congress.

That some legal enactment for the organization and management of the institution is indispensably necessary, there can be no doubt.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. McCLELLAND,

*Secretary.*

HON. LINN BOYD,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE OF THE ARMY & NAVY, AND OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, *Washington, D. C., Dec. 23, 1854.*

SIR: In answer to your communication of the 20th instant, transmitting a copy of a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 19th, relating to the hospital, and requesting me to report upon the subject, as early as practicable, to your department, I respectfully submit, herewith, a project of a law, marked A, for the permanent organization of this institution.

In framing this proposed law, I have sought to conform its provisions, both for the supervisory and the administrative government of the hospital, strictly to the propositions for the organization of such institutions (an exact copy of which, marked B, is hereto appended,) put forth by the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, which I deem authoritative, as the united and well-matured judgment of the considerable body of medical men in our country who devote themselves to the care and treatment of the insane.

The plan here submitted coincides, as far as the circumstances correspond, with the organizations of the State and corporate institutions of the country, which are now very nearly uniform. Their example may, I think, justly be regarded both as a safe guide and a binding precedent, since the plan of organization prevalent among them was not accidentally hit upon and found to answer, but the result, in the case of every one of the oldest institutions, of experiment and change, till, guided by the light of experience, they were led, by different but more or less devious paths, to adopt that here recommended. Every institution in the country which has been carried into operation within the last ten years has been organized on the same principles, and is essentially the same in detail.

It is believed that the provisions proposed for the admission of patients are in conformity with the benevolent designs of Congress in establishing the institution, and with the laws and customs of the several departments concerned, and will at the same time be equally applicable to any changes that may hereafter be made in the legal relations of either of the classes of insane persons for which the hospital is designed.

The mode of organization here suggested being in no respects novel, but supported so decidedly by the experience and success of practical men, it may be thought unnecessary for me to enlarge either in its defence or in further explanation of its provisions.

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

C. H. NICHOLS, *Superintendent.*

HON. ROBERT McCLELLAND, *Secretary of the Interior.*

## A.

AN ACT to organize an institution for the insane in the District of Columbia.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the title of the institution shall be The National Hospital for the Insane, and its objects shall be, the most humane care and enlightened curative treatment of the insane of the army and navy and of the District of Columbia.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That nine citizens, a majority of whom shall reside within ten miles of the institution, to be appointed by the President of the United States, shall constitute a board of trustees or regents of the said hospital. The term of office of three of the nine trustees shall expire on the thirtieth day of June, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, and biennially thereafter on the same day of the year, when they shall be reappointed, or three other citizens appointed in their stead. The order in which the terms of office of the nine first appointees shall expire shall be determined by lot; and should any vacancy occur by death, resignation, or otherwise, such vacancy shall be filled by appointment for the unexpired term of such trustee. The board of trustees, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, shall appoint the superintendent whenever a vacancy occurs in that office, and determine his salary and that of the subordinate officers of the institution; they may make any needful by-laws for the government of themselves and of the resident officers, patients, and attendants, not inconsistent with this act nor with the constitution and laws of the United States; they shall visit the hospital at stated periods, and exercise so careful a supervision over its expenditures and general operations that the government and community may have a proper degree of confidence in the correctness of its management; they shall make annually to the Secretary of the Interior a report for the preceding year ending June thirtieth, setting forth the condition and wants of the institution. The board shall elect one of their number president, who shall preside at their meetings for one year, or till a successor is elected. The office of trustee shall be honorary and without compensation, but the members of the board shall be entitled to be paid their actual expenses incurred in the discharge of their duties.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That the President of the United States and the members of his cabinet shall be *ex officio* visitors of the institution.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That the superintendent shall be a well-educated physician, possessing competent experience in the care and treatment of the insane; he shall be the chief executive officer of the establishment, shall reside on the premises, and devote his whole time and energies to the welfare of the institution. He shall appoint, subject to the approval of the trustees, an assistant physician, a steward, and a matron, and direct them in the discharge of their duties; he shall also hire and discharge all attendants and assistants employed in the hospital or on the farm, and determine their wages and duties; he shall be the responsible disbursing agent of the institution, and shall be *ex officio* secretary of the board of trustees.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That the order of the Secretary of War and that of the Secretary of the Navy shall authorize the superintendent to receive insane persons belonging to the army and navy respectively, and keep them in custody till they are cured or removed by the same authority which ordered their reception.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted,* That all indigent insane persons residing in the District of Columbia at the time they became insane shall be entitled to the benefits of the institution, and shall be admitted on the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, which he may grant after due process of law showing the person to be insane and unable to support himself, or herself, and family, (or themselves, if they have no family,) under the visitation of insanity.

SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted,* That whenever there are vacancies, private patients may be received at a rate of board to be determined by the trustees, but to be in no case less than the actual cost of their support.

SEC. 8. *And be it further enacted,* That all appropriations of money by Congress for the support of the institution shall be drawn from the treasury on the requisition of the Secretary of the Interior, and shall be disbursed and accounted for in all respects according to the laws regulating ordinary disbursements of public money.

SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted,* That this act shall take effect from and after the first day of July, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five.

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## B.

*Report on the Organization of Hospitals for the Insane, made by the standing committee of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, at its meeting in Baltimore, May 10, 1853.*

"The propositions relative to the construction of hospitals, having met with so universal an approval from all connected with or interested in the subject, and a want seeming to the Association still to remain unsatisfied, a committee was appointed at the meeting held in New York, last year, to draw up a series of propositions that should, in like manner, embody the well ascertained views of its members in reference to the organization of hospitals for the insane, in regard to which there was no difference of opinion. As is stated in our report of the meeting at Baltimore, posted, each proposition was taken up in detail and minutely and fairly discussed, before it was finally accepted. As now laid before our readers, the propositions may be received as the authorized exponents of the views of the above Association, on the organization of hospitals for the insane."

*American Journal of Insanity.*

1. The general controlling power should be vested in a board of trustees, or managers, if of a State institution, selected in such a manner as will be likely most effectually to protect it from all influences

connected with political measures or political changes; if of a private corporation, by those properly authorized to vote.

2. The board of trustees should not exceed twelve in number, and be composed of individuals possessing the public confidence, distinguished for liberality, intelligence and active benevolence; above all political influence, and able and willing faithfully to attend to the duties of their stations. Their tenure of office should be so arranged that where changes are deemed desirable, the terms of not more than one-third of the whole number should expire in any one year.

3. The board of trustees should appoint the physician; and on his nomination, and not otherwise, the assistant physician, steward, and matron. They should, as a board, or by committee, visit and examine every part of the institution at frequent stated intervals, not less than semi-monthly, and at such other times as they may deem expedient; and exercise so careful a supervision over the expenditures and general operations of the hospital as to give the community a proper degree of confidence in the correctness of its management.

4. The physician should be the superintendent and chief executive officer of the establishment. Besides being a well-educated physician, he should possess the mental, physical, and social qualities to fit him for the post. He should serve during good behavior; reside on or very near the premises; and his compensation should be so liberal as to enable him to devote his whole time and energies to the welfare of the hospital. He should nominate to the board suitable persons to act as assistant physician, steward, and matron. He should have the entire control of the medical, moral, and dietetic treatment of the patients; the unreserved power of appointment and discharge of all persons engaged in their care; and should exercise a general supervision and direction of every department of the institution.

5. The assistant physician, or assistant physicians, where more than one are required, should be graduates of medicine, of such character and qualifications as to be able to represent and to perform the ordinary duties of the physician during his absence.

6. The steward, under the direction of the superintending physician, and by his order, should make all purchases for the institution, keep the accounts, make engagements with, pay and discharge those employed about the establishment, have a supervision of the farm, garden, and grounds, and perform such other duties as may be assigned him.

7. The matron, under the direction of the superintendent, should have a general supervision of the domestic arrangements of the house, and under the same direction do what she can to promote the comfort and restoration of patients.

8. In institutions containing more than two hundred patients, a second assistant physician and apothecary should be employed, to the latter of whom other duties, in the male wards, may be conveniently assigned.

9. If a chaplain is deemed desirable as a permanent officer, he should be selected by the superintendent, and, like all others engaged in the care of the patients, should be entirely under his direction.

10. In every hospital for the insane there should be one supervisor for each sex, exercising a general oversight of all the attendants and



patients, and forming a medium of communication between them and the officers.

11. In no institution should the number of persons in immediate attendance on the patients be in a lower ratio than one attendant for every ten patients; and a much larger proportion of attendants will commonly be desirable.

12. The fullest authority should be given the superintendent to take every precaution that can guard against fire or accident within an institution; and to secure this, an efficient night watch should always be provided.

13. The situation and circumstances of different institutions may require a considerable number of individuals to be employed in various other positions; but in every hospital, at least all those that have been referred to are deemed not only desirable but absolutely necessary, to give all the advantages that may be hoped from a liberal and enlightened treatment of the insane.

14. All persons employed in the care of the insane should be active, vigilant, cheerful, and in good health. They should be of a kind and benevolent disposition, be educated, and in all respects trustworthy, and their compensation should be sufficiently liberal to secure the services of individuals of this description.

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As it was *entirely* through *my* instrumentality the appropriation was made by Congress for the establishment of the Asylum for the insane of the army, navy, and District of Columbia, I cannot but feel a deep interest in the institution, and a sincere desire to see it properly organized, that the beneficent design of Congress may be fully carried out.

With this view, after conference with my friend Senator Hunter, of Virginia, who was cognizant of my efforts to procure this appropriation and establish this institution, I take the liberty to present the following suggestions to the Hon. Secretary of the Interior for his consideration:

1. That there be a President, to be a medical man, the consulting physician and surgeon of the institution, and the presiding officer of the Board of Directors.

2. A Board of Directors, composed of an officer of the army, an officer of the navy, a citizen of Washington, and one from Georgetown, (the Mayor *ex officio*), who shall be empowered to make rules and regulations (to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior) for the government of the institution and the admission of patients; to elect or appoint the resident physician, steward, and matron, and to have control of the monetary affairs of the institution, and to report annually to the Secretary of the Interior the condition of the institution.

3. A resident physician, steward, and matron, appointed as above, and as many nurses, waiters, laborers, &c., as may be required to conduct the institution successfully, to be appointed by the resident physician.

4. The resident physician to be the secretary, to keep record of proceedings, account of money received and expended, and to report to the board at its meetings, monthly.

It was originally contemplated to admit into the Asylum pay-patients from the States and elsewhere, that its benefits might be more widely extended. Whether this be admissible or not I am unable to say; but if it can be, I hope it will be done. Otherwise, many in this District and vicinity, who would like to avail themselves of the advantages of this institution, and have their unfortunate friends taken care of near them, will be deprived of it.

THO. MILLER.

DECEMBER 7, 1854.

